

Chapter 7 Adults and Institutions

THE foregoing chapters have searched for the possible growth of the social personality in Adolescing and simultaneously have tried to indicate how that personality is both the product of social forces and the active agent in them. In this section the attempt will be made to work further for the interrelated forces and forms of personality as they manifest themselves in institutions, values, and everyday modes of emotional expression and behavior among adults.

STATUS AND FINANCE

- 124 In the formation of personality the devices furnished by the culture for placing oneself in relation to other individuals are important. In other words, the social forms of a culture may well have significant repercussions on ego development. In Adolescing there are four main factors determining status: age, sex, wealth, and kinship. The age and sex factors are beyond individual control and function automatically. This might be an optimal situation for the individual, although the reverse of the coin may not be forgotten: there is automatically differentiation between the young and the young. The wealth factor is considered almost a function of age, although obviously it is far from being so. It is noteworthy that wealth status is not formalized. There is hardly a trace of institutional expression of such or of inheritance of financial position. Every one's financial resources are largely, although not completely, contained in his death certificate, since the wealth of a man is, the more elaborate his post-mortem prestige. Social prestige depending on wealth, therefore, must be constantly upheld by individual effort. The burden as well as the rewards of such effort rest primarily on middle-aged men. The manipulation of the wealth-status system is one requiring constant vigilance, aggression, chicanery, and an excellent memory. The stress that successful competition places on a man is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that, if they have this one, old men usually withdraw gradually from active participation and retain power only in an advisory capacity. They leave the actual doing to younger and more vigorous men.
- 125 Every competitive system automatically implies that a large portion of the population will fail to achieve the goal set up by the culture. Granting, therefore, that a competitive system will automatically deter